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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN ARRESTED FOR PLANNING CAR BOMBING IN  
TIMISOARA

¶1. (SBU) Romanian media have reported heavily on the arrest June 26 of a Romanian man near Timisoara who allegedly planned to detonate a car bomb in a busy intersection to protest Romania's military contribution to Iraq and strong relationship with the U.S. Suspect Ioan Florin Lesch, also called Anynan Hassan Abger, had reportedly loaded the vehicle with two containers of methane gas, which he had connected to a remote control detonator. Police and the security services reportedly stopped and arrested Lesch as he was en route to carry out the attack. The Romanian Information Service (SRI) Anti-Terrorist Brigade confirmed the arrest to the Embassy.

¶2. (U) Lesch had been under surveillance by security services for over a year, according to the press, after he reportedly informed associates that he supported the Islamic Jihad and had contacts with members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In days before his arrest, he also sent video-messages via email to a number of Romanian and international broadcast outlets, including Al Jazeera and CNN. He reportedly converted from Romanian Orthodox to Islam in 2002. The press also reported that the SRI claimed Lesch had been trained in "religious Muslim camps" in Romania and that he told interrogators he had traveled to Bosnia. According to the press, Romanian security services had intercepted telephone conversations and e-mail correspondence in which Lesch deliberated over which crowded location he should target.

¶3. (U) Media interviewed Lesch's mother and neighbors who claimed to have had no knowledge of his religious conversion or of his strong political views. They described him as an eccentric show-off but not as dangerous. A number of news outlets have also begun to accuse the SRI of exaggerating the case. Lesch has reportedly been brought to Bucharest for interrogation and expected indictment.

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